

# A window on business



Dan Coyro/Sentin

Karen and John Hibble work on many projects from their glass-overlay shop.

## Overall, they're a busy couple

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**T**HE TINY WOODEN building, almost shack-like in appearance, sits seemingly forlorn under the gigantic, century-old redwood trees in Redwood Village shopping center.

Few might realize that many of Aptos' businesses revolve around the 350-square-foot building. In fact, one might even go so far as to say the building or — more appropriately, the couple that runs the business operating out of the building — helps businesses throughout mid-county.

John and Karen Hibble, owners of Stained Glass Overlay Designs, do more than just run their stained-glass business.

For one, they're co-managers of the Aptos Chamber of Commerce. Since becoming involved with the chamber in 1981, with John serving as president in 1984, they've been a key factor in increasing membership from 75 businesses to 306. Karen was named Woman of the Year by the chamber in 1986 for her effort.

They've also become involved with the neighboring Capitola Chamber, having been organizers of that chamber's annual Art and Wine Festival last year. They'll continue in that role this year for the Sept. 19-20 event. The Hibbles also have organized past Home and Leisure Shows at the Capitola Mall.

"In order to make it in business — our

stained glass product isn't easily visualized — we had to figure out ways to show it to people," says John. "We got involved in the chambers and these shows to showcase our product and expand our network of people."

The result has been both financial success for the Hibbles and a much-needed boost to the sometimes-struggling chambers, which often are short of volunteers.

Of course, it also helped that John and Karen had a popular product. And, that's where Stained Glass Overlay Designs came into play.

The product is not actual stained glass. Rather, it produces an overlay of simulated stained glass. Unlike real stained glass, which involves painting on glass and firing it in a kiln, such as with church windows, overlays involve color and lead that is bonded to a single sheet of glass. That overlay is then placed over glass.

Not only does the overlay strengthen the glass, it also makes windows energy-efficient, the Hibbles say. They point to such advantages as the fact it can be used on so many things, as long as they contain glass. This ranges from skylights and front door sidelights to shower enclosures and sliding glass doors.

"We've done applications lying down in bathtubs and standing in hot tubs," says

Karen, laughing.

The overlays can also be applied to glass already in place, making it unnecessary to remove existing glass and having to put up with a mess while the overlay is being done. The Hibbles have access to hundreds of colors and designs.

They'll custom-design scenes featuring everything from birds and flowers to hot-air balloons.

The overlays also are less expensive than real stained glass, and the Hibbles say they compete competitively with the cost of curtains, drapes and other window treatments.

The Hibbles have expanded their "designer glass" line to include beveled glass in standard or custom patterns, and etched/carved glass using a sophisticated photographic process. Next, they brought in handsculpted, cultured stone tiles and murals called Terra Stone. Handmade in Fresno for 25 years, the tiles are unavailable elsewhere locally. Their newest products include a line of oak and mahogany doors made for custom glass and custom inlaid glass.

So popular is their primary product that it's often advertised on that game show of all game shows — Wheel of Fortune. And, that's not bad for a couple that started in their garage in 1980.

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